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## THE COMMISSION AS IT OPERATES IN AUSTIN, TEXAS

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Mayor and Superintendent of Public Affairs, Austin, Texas.

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I think I may say with perfect confidence that the overwhelming proportion of our people is well satisfied with the operation of the commission form of government in this city, during the two and a third years, about, of its history. The affairs of the city government, I feel warranted in saying, are dispatched with more promptness, more efficiency, and more economy than ever before in its history.

It may be worth while to instance the operation of this form of government as it works with us. We combine in one body the legislative and administrative powers of a city government. The legislative part of our work, while important is very inconsiderable in bulk. Nine-tenths of our work is executive.

Each commissioner realizes his responsibility for the work of his department and, as a consequence, does his best. The public knows definitely who is responsible for the city's affairs in its several departments and holds the commissioners accordingly.

Under the operation of a short ballot, we have been able to induce a number of our very best men to run for office. They practically put in their whole time in charge of the city's affairs, and each is becoming an expert in his particular department. They are assigned to departments according to their adaptability to the work of their special department.

While each commissioner administers the affairs of his special department without interference from the others, we constantly have conferences about important matters affecting the general good of the whole town. We often have as many as two or three short meetings a day, and habitually have two important meetings each week.

The principal opposition encountered by us has come from two sources: (1) Certain of the "outs" who would like to be in office again for the honor and emolument of place. (2) Some of the

largest taxpayers who do not like, apparently, to be required to do as others do and who want to dominate local affairs.

Under the commission form of government, with good men offering, and only if good men offer, political bosses do not have much show, and they are beginning to realize that fact.

This is a small city. Our population by the census of 1910 is 29,860. Among the things accomplished by us during the first two years of our administration, was an increase of assessed values in the amount of \$5,019,357. By the end of the year 1910, we had paid off overdrafts, partly inherited and partly incurred during the first part of our administration, in the amount of \$31,529.37. We also redeemed \$29,000 of our (non-due) bonds, and had, at the end of last year, \$93,432.57 surplus funds on hand and no kind of floating debt. In fact, we paid in 1910 thirteen months' liabilities in twelve months' time. We reduced the tax rate twenty-four cents on each \$100 of valuation in our first two years of administration.

All the city's money is at interest. Since May of the present year we have been getting interest for it at the rate of six and one-fiftieth per cent. Thus far we have collected for the nine months of this year \$6,272.15 in interest on city money.

I think I may say that there is active work going on in all branches of the city government, and I feel I can be justified in saying that it is characterized by absolute integrity, good efficiency, and sensible economy. We do not spend less than our predecessors under the old aldermanic form spent, but we believe we make the dollar go much further and with better results.